

BOOTH FAMILY

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CONTEMPORARIES

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# Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

## Booth Family

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

## BOOTH'S MOTHER

1521

From Harrisburg (Pa.) Telegraph

"Crowding Memories," by Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, shows a new side to the great tragedy of Lincoln's assassination. Edwin Booth and his mother were intimate friends of the Aldriches. The terrible suffering and suspense of John Wilkes Booth's family in the ten days between the assassination and his death made a most graphic picture. It was necessary for Mrs. Booth to take a train out of New York. There was a long drive across the city and Mr. Aldrich and another friend offered to go with her. They were startled by the loud call of a newsboy crying, 'Death of John Wilkes Booth. Capture of his companion.' Mr. Thompson made some trivial excuse which enabled him to close the windows and draw down the curtains, and all through the endless way to the ferry was the accompaniment of this shrill and tragic cry, which Mr. Thompson struggled by loud and incessant talk to smother, that it might not reach the ears of the broken-hearted mother until he had an opportunity to buy a paper and know if the news was true. On the arrival at the boat he hurried the shrouded figure in his charge to a secluded corner of the deck, where he hoped she might escape, both in sight and hearing, the excitement that was seething about her.

"When he had found a seat in the crowded train for Mrs. Booth, he left her for a moment and bought a newspaper, and had time only to put it in her hand and to say: 'You will need now all your courage. The paper in your hand will tell you what, unhappily, we must all wish to hear. John Wilkes is dead;' and as he spoke the car slowly started, leaving Mr. Thompson only time to spring to the platform. On the moving train, surrounded by strangers, the poor mother sat alone in her misery, while every one about her, unconscious of her presence, was reading and talking, with burning indignation, of her son, the assassin of the President. Before the train had reached its journey's end, Mrs. Booth, with wonderful fortitude and self-restraint had read the pitiful story of her misguided boy's wanderings, capture and death. And alone in her wall of silence read—'Tell my mother that I died for my country.'"

## The Booth Family.

The Booth family, at present, consists of the following members: The widow of the elder Booth: Lucius Junius Brutus, the eldest son, and tragedian; Edwin Booth; Joseph Booth who at the breaking out of the war, was a student in Charleston, studying in the office of Dr. C. Davega, and is now assistant treasurer in the Winter Garden; and two daughters one a middle aged lady and unmarried and the other the wife of Clarke, the comedian, manager of the Winter Garden, of which he and Edwin are lessees. Mrs. Clarke is a most talented lady and is author of a biographical sketch of her father—a well written and most interesting work, published recently. Edwin Booth has been a widower for about three years and has one child a sweet little four-year old prattler to whom her father is most devotedly attached; there is not a single wavelet in the sea of toys, either here or elsewhere, that the pretty little Edwina can wish for in vain, and 'Moultree' has whiled away many a weary moment in listening to the prattle of this extraordinary and intelligent child, as she displayed her toys and described to him in detail the beauty of the dresses of her three dolls.—*New York correspondence Charleston News.* 1866

S. 18. 1866

Wilkes Booth, whose body Secretary Stanton took so much pains to dispose of so that no man should ever know the spot where it was buried, is reported to be in Europe. The story is that the man whom Boston Corbett so heroically shot, and whose body Stanton refused to exhibit to any one that ever saw Booth, was a poor wretch hired by the assassins to personate Booth, in order to facilitate the escape of the latter. Whether there be or not any truth in this story, it will never cease to be a suspicious circumstance connected with the fate of Wilkes Booth, that Stanton refused to deliver the body that was brought up from Virginia to his friends, or even to let them look upon it.

## BOOTH, FATHER AND SONS.

Traits of Old Junius Brutus That Lived Again in the Murderer, John Wilkes.

CHICAGO, June 16.—Two or three weeks before the murder of President Lincoln I went to Washington from New York on my way to the army, and stopping in at the Metropolitan Hotel fell among some drinking gentlemen, and one of them was John Wilkes Booth, to whom I was then for the first and only time introduced. Booth had a way of drawing very close to you and talking to you with his eyes close and confidential, as a designing person talks to a woman he would ensnare. However, he was engaging and had magnetism. Reminding him of the many times I had seen him play in Philadelphia he kindled to my acquaintance, and we continued to smoke, tinkle and converse, until it came my time to take the steamer down the Potomac River to Fortress Monroe. At that port, as I was returning from Richmond but a little while afterward, I was told that the President had been murdered by the great actor, Edwin Booth. I inferred that Wilkes Booth was the criminal and so expressed myself.

It is well known that Edwin Booth, with a costly remorse which did him honor, never played after the tragedy in Washington. I know of no similar evidence of the historical and moral quality in the history of the stage. Mr. Ford, the manager of the theater, announced its opening before the blood of Lincoln was well scoured from the floor, and this led Secretary Stanton to buy the theater, in order that the scene of Lincoln's murder might not become a variety show. The stage experienced a great political purification about that time, for a large proportion of its followers had been hisses at the Government. Before the war the stage had to contend in the North with the moral classes, while theatricals were comparatively strong all over the South. The assassin Booth was of a purely instinctive character, making much of the personal fidelities which are told in "Damon and Pygias" and similar plays, and he had been so followed and petted in the South about the time the war commenced that he killed Mr. Lincoln as a souvenir of his fidelity to the Richmond people, using the motto of Virginia as he stalked across the stage in the instant of the murder.

Edwin Booth, according to my observation and conviction, was the best master on the American stage, and rather more of a man than any one upon it. He was staid neither on nor off the stage. He inherited a disposition for drink and for moodiness, but overcame them both, and was as reliable in his entries and exits as his father was unreliable. Edwin Booth could not escape the cloud which hung over his father's nature, and which was partly moral and partly alcoholic. There is no doubt that the father Booth married in Belgium when a young actor, and that when he married the second time he had not been divorced, and therefore felt that he might come under the dominion of the law. There was always something lurking and hiding in old Booth. The story told by Macready and others of how he was discovered in the English provinces acting the slinking and revengeful persons, with his rich dark face and imitation of Edmund Kean's style, comes to mind as we recall his dark descendant. Sent for to come up to London and play against Kean at a rival theater, the greater actor invited him to come upon the same stage at once. But the moral nature of old Booth, as we call him, fell down at this frank condescension. It soon became apparent that he could not stand the

The audience saw, as the play proceeded, that Booth grew smaller and weaker, and Kean excelled himself. Next we hear of Booth playing off again in the provinces, and celebrating himself with inferiors, which was the method of his life. He took his family to a spot on the old high road between Baltimore and Philadelphia, where they were secluded by the woods from human intrusion, probably fearing that some one would come along who would detect the bigamist and expose him. The children had but a dim understanding of this and loved their mother. I have been in the little town of

Bellaire several times, where Booth came forward to try his father's profession in the town hall or court house.

I recollect Edwin Booth as far back as about 1857-58, when he was playing "The Fool's Revenge," and I think Mortimer in "The Iron Chest." There was something refinedly subtle about him in his youth. He had a manly head and a serious eye in it. He was fitted to become a noble actor by natural experience and suffering. The Northern public took him up as a man worth encouraging, and so he is buried in Boston, while he himself buried under a monument at Baltimore his father and his father's deceased children.

Taking to himself friends of nobler quality than his father would admit, Edwin Booth encouraged his own appreciation of the high parts he revealed. Acting must be in much mechanical, for the novice who would play with inspiration and restraint would soon throw out of tune the subordinate company. Acting, indeed, is more art than genius. Even Sarah Bernhardt, with all her apparent effervescence and frenzy, has measured every step of that small stage which she must pass as she carries the blood-stained dagger in her hand and seems to be Lady Macbeth, out of her mind, totally unprepared. It is horrible to think that so had John Wilkes Booth studied every step of the stage where he killed Lincoln; had probably practiced his leaping from the second story box, where he was to do the murder, and had rehearsed the half a dozen words he was to say in the presence of the audience. Here was a man who lived for the front of the house, while Edwin Booth, the brother, was very little seen among the haunts of men or picking up friendships in the barrooms. Yet Edwin Booth was companionable and simple in his intercourse. He had solicited life on the kindly side and it had responded to him cordially. He found high company, and Wilkes Booth found low company. The familiars around the stage, such as Spangler, the scene shifter, were to Wilkes Booth's liking.

Washington could have given Edwin Booth from \$5,000 to \$10,000, perhaps \$20,000, every year he lived, subsequent to the dastardly act of this brother, but with the feeling which Secretary Stanton had, that his brother had outraged hospitality, like Macbeth, and desecrated with the name of Booth the public capital, he refused for all the remainder of his life to wear his theater trappings or take toll at the theater gate in the city of Washington. You can compute at \$5,000 a year for twenty-five years how Edwin Booth sacrificed \$125,000 to the name, not of his brother, but of Mr. Lincoln, for whom he voted when Lincoln ran the second time for President. If he could have made \$10,000 a year out of Washington city, and I think it quite probable, he sacrificed \$250,000. It might be said over his grave, "Here lies an actor who would rather have reverence than money."

I found a person in Washington, Mr. Harbin, who met Booth in Virginia after he had crossed the river, and to whom he said many strange things, such as: "When I broke the bone in my leg I felt that I was going to swoon upon the stage, and I would have been captured right there if I had not been a very brave man. I kept my will and got away." The wretch, when he got to Surrattsville, could not restrain his braggart nature from calling to the drunken tavernkeeper there, "Do you want to hear some news? We have killed Lincoln and Seward, etc."

Thomas Harbin, who was the second person to enter into the conspiracy with Booth, the first having been Dr. Mudd, said to me:

"I have no doubt that at the time John Booth was under the influence of alcohol, and I think he was more or less drunk from the time he conceived the abduction of Lincoln down to his escape from the theater. It looks to me now like an alcoholic crime."

Booth came to Bryantown Catholic Church on a Sunday, and picked up Mudd, and Mudd went out and got Harbin, and these three were the original plotters in the second story of the mean looking tavern at Bryantown. Mr. Harbin told me that Spangler was fully in the job, to embarrass the stage by shifting his scenes and putting out the lights, etc. Yet, the secession tribe for years after that crime shouted that Spangler was a poor fellow who knew nothing of the deed beforehand. Mudd was the means of introducing Surratt to Booth and involving that silly family in the tragedy.

GEORGE ALFRED TOWNSEND.

## Booth the Physician.

### A Younger Brother of the Tragedian Who Studied Medicine.

TO THE NEW YORK HERALD: Will you kindly tell me in what year the corner stone of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine was laid.

Did Edwin Booth, the actor, have a brother who was a doctor and in what year did he die? Mrs. C. H. W.

PHILADELPHIA, February 10.

The corner stone of the cathedral was laid in 1892.

William Winter in his biography of the late Edwin Booth refers to Joseph Adrian Booth, son of Junius Brutus Booth and brother of Edwin, Junius Brutus the second and John Wilkes Booth. He studied medicine but is said to have practiced only for a short time. The biography says that in 1893 Joseph Adrian Booth was the only surviving child of the elder Junius Brutus Booth.

*Wm. C. R. Herald Feb. 17. 2. 2*

## WAS MRS. BOOTH INHUMAN?

Compiled by HERBERT WELLS FAY, Custodian Lincoln's Tomb

Was J. Wilkes Booth's mother a fiend? Was she the most inhuman parent of history? Did she wilfully and maliciously falsify and fasten one of the greatest crimes of all time upon her own blood? Did she overlook a chance to clear her family name?

These questions are asked because people will disregard the documentary evidence in the case and the conclusions of all the reputable historians of Lincoln.

Self-preservation is the first law of nature. There is, however, one exception. A parent, or at least a mother, will die in protecting her offspring. This, equally, is the instinct of the birds of the air and the beasts of the forest.

The undisputed evidence in the Booth case is this: Harold was in the home where the plot was laid. Harold held Booth's horse at the theatre. Harold was with Booth when Doctor Mudd set Booth's leg. Harold was at the Garrett barn where Booth was shot.

If the man whom Boston Corbett shot in the barn was not Booth, then Booth did not assassinate Lincoln, and Mrs. Booth's identification of the body was that of her son was the most unnatural crime of a mother in all history. That Mrs. Booth would deliberately fasten the assassination of Lincoln on her son, that an entire stranger could coin money is absurd indeed.

No one could believe that unless he had a mother who would do the same.

But the average citizen is awed by family traditions and sworn affidavits, and they are generally good unless overcome by documentary evidence. However, there were five alleged skulls of Booth shown in five states at one time, and each supported by a chain of affidavits. That seemed conclusive, but, of course, it would be impossible. This shows how affidavits may not be conclusive.

To show that the Booths had great regard for the family name, Edwin Booth refused to make a date in Springfield years afterward, except on petition of

one thousand of the representative citizens. The paper was signed in a few hours.

In the issue of "Week by Week," of July 27, 1935, the writer printed a statement giving the documentary evidence in the Booth case, establishing the following points:

Booth was identified by photos.

Corbett tells his own story.

The identification by the mother.

Enid embalmer not convinced.

Affidavits give Booth five skulls.

The statement follows:

As from time to time persons have appeared on the scene claiming that they were J. Wilkes Booth there is a widespread tradition that the man killed 12 days after the tragic event was not Lincoln's assassin.

I have two original documents in my collection that authorities on such matters say cannot be picked up elsewhere for even \$100,000, in fact, no money value can be placed upon such historic treasures. They are a personal letter from Mr. Baker, who represented the U. S. secret service in the capture of Booth and the personal statement penned in 1887 by Boston Corbett who killed J. Wilkes Booth. They are as follows:

Lansing, Mich., Dec. 15, 1894.

H. W. Fay, Esq., DeKalb, Ill.

Dear Sir: Your favor of 6th inst. at hand. I send you under another cover one of my combination pictures, with circulars that explain themselves.

The picture of Lincoln is a copy of a photo I obtained in Washington, D. C., just before the assassination. It is a first copy of a negative taken by Alex. Gardner, just before Lee's surrender. I know it is a good one, as I frequently saw the original in those days.

The likeness of Booth is also a copy of one I have in my possession. It has a history and I value it very highly. It was taken from Laura Keene's room the day after the assassination. It was found

concealed behind a fancy picture on her mantle. You remember she was under arrest a short time as one of Booth's accomplices, but was soon released as no evidence appeared against her.

This likeness of Booth is said to be the best in existence. The copy I have I carried with me while in his pursuit and he was identified by it.

Corbett's likeness was also taken from a negative in Washington. The original is now in the possession of a comrade and chum of his while in the service. I met him on one of my lecture trips and obtained a copy, the negative of which I have. The central picture is explained by the card on its back.

I was in DeKalb about a year ago. Had I known of your collection of photos, should most certainly have given you a call. I would like to secure a good picture of Mrs. Surratt and her son John.

Very truly yours,

J. B. BAKER.

New York City,  
Jan. 24, 1938

Dr. Louis A. Warren,  
Lincoln National Life Foundation,  
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Dr. Warren:

I shall appreciate your kindness in sending me information regarding the play in which Lincoln was ridiculed and knowing Junius Brutus Booth's connection with it. I have a report of such a play having been given in Baltimore during March of 1861, entitled, The Lost Ship or The Flight of Abraham, but I have not the cast and therefore do not know who was associated with the production.

Sincerely,

S. P. Kimmel

S. P. Kimmel,  
64 South Pierson Road,  
Maplewood, New Jersey.

February 1906

Ms. A. 9. 2. 117

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January 28, 1938

Mr. S. P. Kimmel  
64 South Pierson Road  
Maplewood, New Jersey

Dear Mr. Kimmel:

I have your letter of January 24 to Dr. Warren who is absent from the city on his annual three months speaking itinerary.

Your letter is being held until his return in April.

Yours very truly,

MAC:EB  
M.A. Cook

Librarian

March 24, 1938

Mr. S. P. Kimmel  
64 South Pierson Road  
Maplewood, New Jersey

My dear Mr. Kimmel:

I am not familiar with the play "The Lost Ship" or "The Flight of Abraham" in which Junius Brutus Booth ridiculed Lincoln.

You will find, however, in the Magazine of History for February 1906 an article which states conclusively that Junius Brutus Booth, Jr. did take part in a play in which Lincoln was ridiculed. The title of this play, however, was Bombastes Furioso.

If you can discover the other play which you mention in which Abraham Lincoln is ridiculed we should like very much to hear about it.

Yours very truly,

DAW:EB

Director

**EDWIN BOOTH: MY BROTHER JOHN**

Windsor Hotel.

July 28th, '81.

Nahum Capen Esq.

Dear Sir,

I can give you very little information regarding my brother John. I seldom saw him since his early boyhood in Baltimore. He was a rattle-pated fellow, filled with Quixotic notions. While on the farm in Maryland he would charge on horseback, through the woods, shouting heroic speeches, with a lance in his hand, a relic of the Mexican War, given to father by some soldier who had served under Taylor. We regarded him as a good-hearted, harmless, though wild-brained boy, and used to laugh at his patriotic froth whenever secession was discussed. That he was insane on that point, no one who knew him well can doubt. When I told him that I had voted for Lincoln's re-election he expressed deep regret, and declared his belief that Lincoln would be made King of America, and this, I believe, was the idea that drove him beyond the limit of reason. I asked him once, why he did not join the Confederate Army, to which he replied: I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel, if possible, and I'm sorry that I did so". Knowing my sentiments he avoided me, rarely visiting my house, except to see his mother, when political topics were not touched upon, at least in my presence. He was of a gentle, loving disposition, very boyish and "full of fun" his mothers' darling, and his deed & death crushed her spirit. He possessed rare dramatic talent and would have made a brilliant mark in the theatrical world.

This is positively all I know about him, having left him a mere school-boy when I went with my father to California in 1852, and on my return in '56 we were separated by professional engagements, which kept him mostly in the South while I was employed in the Eastern & Northern States. I do not believe any of the wild, romantic stories published in the papers concerning him, but, of course, he may have been engaged in political matters of which I know nothing. All his theatrical friends speak of him as a poor crazy boy,

## New Light on the Booths

Many biographies of known personalities are merely a rehash of material already presented, sometimes done a little better, oft-times not as well. "The Mad Booths of Maryland" by Stanley Kimmel very distinctly does not however come under the above category. "I do," cried Edwin Forrest, when John McCullough told him he did not believe the report that John Wilkes Booth had killed Lincoln. "I do. It's true. All those — — Booths are crazy." Thus does Edwin Forrest's impulsive declaration add verity to the title of the book.

Perhaps while he was writing it, some of Mr. Kimmel's neighbors heard strange sounds. These were not however bony spectres clattering over a tin roof, but the Booth family skeletons which he was dragging forth from their carefully guarded closets. They had to do partly with the several marriages of the Elder Booth, a circumstance that is said to have driven the Booths into seclusion long before the shadow of John Wilkes' crime fell upon them. Mr. Kimmel in writing about the several conspirators, doesn't hold to the belief that either Mrs. Surratt or Dr. Mudd were innocent of knowledge of the impending assassination. And John Wilkes Booth he describes as "an actor determined to steal the show", ignorant, utterly undisciplined, made for fame, but incapable of making himself worthy of it.

As a model of diligence and perseverance in research, Mr. Kimmel deserves more than a modicum of praise. The author's labors have been enormous. For newspaper notices and reviews of Booth's theatrical performances he remarks casually that he is indebted "to practically all librarians in the principal cities of the United States, several in England, and those of Honolulu, Sydney and Melbourne, Australia." He has studied Miss Helen Menken's collection of Booth letters, which was formerly the property of Asia Booth Clarke. He points out that the building at Belair known as Tudor Hall, which is often photographed as the birthplace of the Booths, was actually not occupied by them until 1853. He establishes Charleston, S. C., as the birthplace of Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., and shows that he died Sept. 17 (not 16), 1883. He cites earlier performances of Edwin Booth than those known to William Winter, and examines California historical records to show that Winter's statement that Edwin was called the "Fiery Star" because fire broke out in all the towns he played in California as soon as he had left them was more picturesque than accurate. He disposes of Daniel Frohman's saying ("Encore") that Edwin played Washington in February, 1884, by showing that Edwin was playing elsewhere all through that month. Izola Forrester's assertion ("This One Mad Act") that Wilkes married a Southern girl Jan. 9, 1859, seems ruled out by reference to an unpublished letter from Mrs. Booth which implies clearly that her son was unmarried at this time.

*file: Pined German*

# VAS YOU EVER IN ZINZINNATI?

BY DICK PERRY

## BOOKS BY DICK PERRY

Raymond and Me That Summer  
The Roundhouse, Paradise, and Mr. Pickering  
Vas You Ever in Zinzinnati?

## PLAYS BY DICK PERRY

Go from Me  
The Briefcase Bohemian of the 7:54  
Forever the Wild Sweet Voice of Lovers  
There'll Never Be Another Bongo

WEATHERVANE BOOKS • NEW YORK

*1966*

livestock. The scare, of course, was Morgan and his Raiders, who actually did less damage to the area than the livestock had done in Avondale. The Governor of Ohio declared martial law again as Morgan approached. He called the militia to active duty again. And on July 12, in Cincinnati, General Ambrose Burnside also declared martial law. But Cincinnati had grown blasé. Didn't Burnside have enough soldiers on tap to settle Morgan's hash? Wasn't Camp Dennison crawling with recruits itching to clobber the rebels? What was the fuss about?

The fuss was really nothing, unless you happened to live in Glendale, where, on July 14, Morgan and his Raiders galloped through. The Glendale residents hid behind locked doors and breathed a sigh of relief when Morgan's men kept right on going. By dawn his raiding party was near Camp Dennison. The invaders put a log on the tracks of the Little Miami Railroad, derailing a train and capturing 150 militia en route to the camp. Morgan let the militia go, figuring they would only slow him down. Other militia from Camp Dennison chased Morgan's party as far as Batavia, where the militia, said Dr. Tucker, "placed a tree across a road to check a possible retreat(!) by the Confederates . . ." So much for the war, *per se*, coming to Cincinnati. It never showed up.

But in 1864 the war elsewhere was going strong. In Cincinnati the price of a substitute soldier had risen to a new high: \$500. James Hollenshade was manufacturing army wagons and pontoon bridges in what was the forerunner of the first assembly line. He made 80 boats and 160 wagons in less than a dozen days. Miles Greenwood's Eagle Iron Works had employed 400 to 700 men, changing 60,000 flintlock rifles to percussion caps at the rate of 800 rifles a day. This was 600 more a day than the National Armory at Springfield could do. Several times Greenwood's factory caught fire. Some said it was the work of southern sympathizers, but the fires actually caused little damage.

Although the surrender of Lee created cheering and wild celebration the day Cincinnati first got wind of the event (April 10), it was decided that Good Friday, April 15, would be the official day to celebrate, which gave some of the celebrants a few days to sober up and have another go at the bubbly. Celebrating was the key. Good Friday found Cincinnati doing little else. Factories had been closed. Schools had been closed. From the country, people poured into the city by every means of transportation available. Bonfires were set everywhere and church bells were poised to ring on cue—all church bells, that is, but the one in the steeple of the College Hill Presbyterian Church (then: the First Presbyterian Church); it had rung so long and so loud on April 10 that it had cracked.

Thomas Edison, who was seventeen at the time, was staying at

the Bevis House, a hotel operated by Martin Bevis and W. H. Ridenour on the southeast corner of Court and Walnut Streets. He was the night telegraph operator who, at three in the morning, received word of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. And with the coming of that terrible word, Cincinnati's celebration ground to a halt and a silence. Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., had been playing a two-week engagement at Pike's when he was told, the next day at rehearsal, that his brother had killed the President. He fainted.

On April 17, Mayor Harris held formal memorial services in the same Pike's Opera House where the assassin's brother had been. There were eulogies by Bellamy Storer, Aaron Perry, Colonel C. F. Noyes, the Reverend J. F. Chalfant, and Samuel Cary.



